# CORNELIUS NEPOS.

## LIVES OF EMINENT COMMANDERS.

### PREFACE.

I do not doubt that there will be many,* Atticus, who will think this kind of writing† trifling in its nature, and not sufficiently adapted to the characters of eminent men, when they shall find it related who taught Epaminondas music, or see it numbered among his accomplishments, that he danced gracefully, and played skilfully on the flutes‡. But these will be such, for the most part, as, being unacquainted with Greek literature, will think nothing right but what agrees with their own customs.

If these readers will but understand that the same things are not becoming or unbecoming among all people, but that every thing is judged by the usages of men's forefathers, they will not wonder that we, in setting forth the excellencies of the Greeks, have had regard to their manners. For to Cimon, an eminent man among the Athenians, it was thought no disgrace to have his half-sister,§ by the father's side, in marriage, as his countrymen followed the same practice; but such a union, according to the order of things among us, is deemed unlawful.

* *Plerosque.*] For *plurimos*. So, a little below, *pleraque—sunt decora*, for *plurima*.

† *Hoc genus scripturæ.*] These brief memoirs of eminent men, interspersed with allusions to national habits and peculiarities.

‡ *Tibiis cantâsse.*] The plural, *flutes*, is used, because the Greeks, and the Romans, who adopted the practice from them, played on different kinds of flutes or pipes, *equal* and *unequal*, *right* and *left-handed*, and often on two at once. See Colman's preface to his translation of Terence; Smith's Classical Dict. art. *Tibia*; Life of Epaminondas, c. 2.

§ *Sororem germanam.*] A half-sister by the *mother's side* was called *soror uterina*. Her name was Elpinice. See the Life of Cimon.

In Greece it is considered an honour to young men to have as many lovers* as possible. At Lacedæmon there is no widow† so noble that will not go upon the stage, if engaged for a certain sum. Through the whole of Greece it was accounted a great glory to be proclaimed a conqueror at Olympia; while to appear upon the stage, and become a spectacle to the public,‡

* *Amatores.*] See the Life of Alcibiades, c. 2. *Apud Græcos*, says Cic. de Rep. fragm. lib. iv., *opprobrio fuit adolescentibus, si amatores non haberent.* See Maximus Tyrius, Dissert. viii.—xi.; Potter's Antiq. of Greece, b. iv. c. 9.

† *Nulla—vidua—quæ non ad scenam eat mercede conducta.*] This is not said with reference to that period in the history of Sparta when it adhered to the laws of Lycurgus, under which it was not allowed to witness either comedy or tragedy, as Plutarch in his *Instituta Laconica* shows, but to the time when the ancient discipline and austerity were trodden under foot, and the state sunk into luxury and effeminacy; a condition of things which took place under Leonidas and Agis, and chiefly, indeed, through the licentiousness of the women, if we may credit what Plutarch says in his life of Agis. From the earliest times, however, according to Aristotle, *Polit.* ii. 9, the Spartan women were inclined to live very intemperately and luxuriously, and Lycurgus endeavoured to subject them to laws, but was obliged to desist, through the opposition which they made. Hence Plato, also, de Legg. lib. ii., alludes to the ἄνεσις, laxity, of the Spartan women.—*Buchner.* But with all such explanations the passage is still difficult and unsatisfactory. Why is a widow particularly specified? No passage in any ancient author has been found to support this observation of Nepos, if it be his. What Aristotle says in disparagement of the Lacedæmonian women is pretty well refuted, as Van Staveren observes, by Plutarch in his life of Lycurgus, c. 14. Besides, there were no female actors among the Greeks. For *ad scenam* Freinshemius (apud Bœcler. ad h. l.) proposes to read *ad cœnam*, which Gesner approves; Heusinger conjectures *ad lenam.* The conjecture of Withof, *ad encœnia*, compared with Hor. A. P. 232, *Festis matrona moveri jussa diebus*, might appear in some degree plausible, were not ἐγκαίνια a word resting on scarcely any other authority than that of the Septuagint and ecclesiastical writers; for though it occurs in Quintilian, vii. 2, the passage is scarcely intelligible, and the reading has generally been thought unsound. Gœrenz, ad Cic. de Fin. ii. 20, would read *quæ non ad cœnam eat mercede condictam*, i. e. to a supper or banquet furnished by a general contribution of the guests. But none of these critics cite any authority in support of their emendations. As to the last, it would be casting no dishonour upon a noble widow to say that she went to a *cœna condicta*, for such *cœna* might be among those of her own class. Nor is the applicability of *mercede* in such a phrase quite certain.

‡ *In scenam prodire et populo esse spectaculo*, &c.] Actors are here confounded with the rhapsodists, or reciters of poetry. Demosthenes,

was a dishonour to no one in that nation, but all these practices are, with us, deemed partly infamous, partly mean, and at variance with respectability. On the other hand, many things in our habits are decorous, which are by them considered unbecoming; for what Roman is ashamed to bring his wife to a feast, or whose consort does not occupy the best room in the house, and live in the midst of company? But in Greece the case is far otherwise; for a wife is neither admitted to a feast, except among relations, nor does she sit anywhere but in the innermost apartment of the house,* which is called the *gynæconitis*, and into which nobody goes who is not connected with her by near relationship.

But both the size of my intended volume, and my haste to relate what I have undertaken, prevent me from saying more on this point. We will therefore proceed to our subject, and relate in this book the lives of eminent commanders.

*de Coronâ*, upbraids Æschines as being an actor.—*Rinckii Prolegom. in Æm. Prob.* p. xlii.

* This is not true of the Spartan women, for they, who boasted that they alone were the mothers of men, led a life of less restraint. Besides, by the laws of Lycurgus, the young women took part in the public exercises.—*Rinck. Prolegom. ibid.*